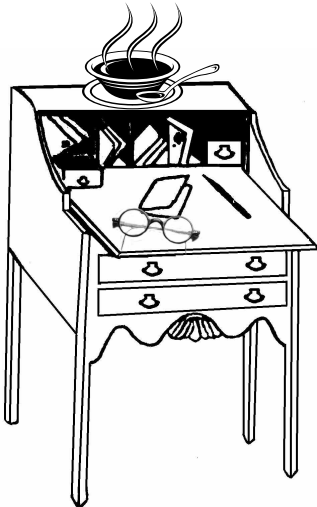


From: Her Desk Drawer

New World Potato Soup with Coriander Cream

This great-tasting thick, hearty soup will likely become a family favourite.



- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | Ontario Onion or 2 thin Ontario Leeks |
| 3 lb | Ontario Potatoes (about 8 medium) |
| 1 tbsp | olive oil |
| 2 | cloves Ontario Garlic, chopped |
| 1/2 tsp | each paprika and ground cumin |
| | Generous pinch cayenne pepper |
| 4 cups | chicken broth |
| 1/2 cup | sour cream |
| 1/4 cup | finely chopped fresh coriander |
| 1 1/2 cups | shredded old Cheddar cheese (about 3 oz) |
| 1/2 tsp | salt |
| 1/2 to 1 cup | milk |

Chop onion. (Or if using leeks, trim off green parts and root ends. Slice white part of each leek lengthwise in half. Rinse under cold water to remove grit. Chop leeks.) Peel potatoes; cut into 1-inch chunks. Set aside. In large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat; cook onions or leeks and garlic, stirring occasionally until tender, about 3 minutes. Stir in paprika, cumin and cayenne until blended; stir in potatoes. Pour in chicken broth. Cover and bring to boil over high heat, stirring occasionally; reduce heat to medium-low and cook, covered, until potatoes are very soft, about 25 minutes. Meanwhile, stir sour cream with coriander. Ladle about half of the soup (making sure to get broth and potatoes) into large bowl; mash with a potato masher until fairly smooth. Return to saucepan. Stir in cheese and salt until cheese is melted. Stir in 1/2 to 1 cup milk, depending on desired thickness. Ladle into bowls. Serve with dollop of coriander cream, swirling if desired.

Taking Care of Our Emotional Health

“Talking it Out”: In Search of Good Conversation

I like my work. I talk with people for a living! There really is no big mystery to what happens in good counselling and therapy. The treatment is in the conversation...creating a safe and secure space in which people can feel heard and responded to, and painful life issues and conflicts can be worked through in a healing and productive way.



john postons

M.S.W.

Tony Soprano has popularized the ‘talking cure’ in the hit HBO television series *The Sopranos*. As a Mafia Don in New Jersey, he is passing out from panic attacks and is sent to a psychotherapist for a consultation. “This isn’t going to work,” he starts out saying. “I can’t talk about my personal life.” Yet session after session we find ourselves in therapy with Tony as we see how “talking it out” is helping him.

The more I talk with people, the more I see how good conversation is becoming increasingly rare in our world. A common denominator in conflicted marriages and family life is how little time people make to talk with each other. A study in last Saturday’s *Globe and Mail* reported that the number of people who say they *do not* have someone to converse with about important issues has tripled in the last two decades, for both women and men. A university professor friend of mine tells me that his first year students can interface with a computer screen, but they can’t have a conversation with him.

All of this is opposed by a significant body of

research that shows the therapeutic value of conversation: it leads to fewer physical health issues, reduces rates of anxiety and depression, and can even promote longevity. There is now neuro-scientific research to show that talking can change brain functioning to create new neural pathways.

So what’s in a good conversation? Webster’s Dictionary defines it as “an oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, or ideas”. Conversation is something we do with someone. It’s reciprocal and it’s multi-dimensional. A conversation can break out anywhere...at the beginning or the end of the day (good for marriages!), while we’re waiting, when we meet, when we’re working or eating or playing together, in private or in public. There are superficial conversations and in-depth ones.

Talking about what matters the most is not easy. A team of researchers at the Harvard Law School note that every difficult conversation is really three conversations:

1. The ‘what happened’ conversation...who said

what, did what, etc?

2. The ‘feelings’ conversation?...how do we each feel about what happened?

3. The ‘identity’ conversation: the conversation we have with ourselves about what the situation means to us? Every difficult conversation is a combination of all three.

Some strategies for creating good conversation:

- Be selective and intentional...choose a time and a place, and a person to have a conversation with...clear away the clutter and distractions...good conversation is worked at!

- Remember the Dale Carnegie secret to success...focus more on being an *interested* person, versus an *interesting* person!

- Ask questions...ones that are open-ended (don’t lead to one-word replies) and invite a story to be told...e.g. “Tell me about your day”, vs. “How was your day?”

- Listen twice as much as you speak...an old farmer’s theology for why God gave us two ears and one mouth!

- Read, follow the news, learn about what’s going on in the lives of others so that you have things to converse about when you meet.

- Be willing to take a risk...self-disclosure is sharing a personal thought, feeling, or experience...it connects us to others and deepens a conversation.

Just out there, not far, around the corner, waiting to happen...the good conversation...it’s one way of taking care of our emotional health!

(Reference: *Difficult Conversations: D. Stone, B. Patton, and S. Heen, 1999*)

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